

Illinois

English

Bulletin

Gleanings from Affiliate Publications
of
National Council of Teachers of English

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Gleanings from Affiliate Publications

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We in Illinois wish to express our appreciation to the authors of the works included in this BULLETIN, and to the affiliates in whose publications these studies first appeared. We also acknowledge the National Council of Teachers of English whose Information Exchange Agreement, to which many of the affiliates subscribe, made possible the publication of much of this material without correspondence with each writer and affiliate. Special permission has been granted by Edgar Dale of Ohio State University to publish his article, "Teaching Critical Thinking."

Introduction

GEORGE S. WYKOFF, Purdue University

Forty-nine publications are now being regularly issued by 44 affiliate organizations of the National Council of Teachers of English. Except for the National Association of Journalism Directors and the Columbia Scholastic Press Advisers' Association, both somewhat unusual affiliates since their membership is also national, the affiliates with publications are state or regional or local (county or city).

Presumably letters of information and regular or special announcements—which many affiliates use—should not be counted as “publications”; therefore, the fact that 44 of the 130 affiliates listed in the NCTE Directory have official publications sounds or looks like a good representation.

In form, these publications vary:

Number of pages: from one side of one page up to 64 printed pages.

Processing: mimeographing, hectographing, photo-offset, letterpress printing.

Page sizes: for printing, usually from 5x8 up to 8x11 inches; for other processing, usually 8½x11 inches.

Frequency of publication: one issue to 3 or 4 to 8 issues a school year.

Content: inclusion of from one to four or five of the following: articles; news; announcements, programs, summaries, and reports of state and national meetings and workshops; public relations material; editorials; idea exchange and teaching aids; book reviews; poems; membership directory; advertisements.

Some publications include student writing occasionally; others have special student-writing issues, sometimes a prose issue, sometimes a poetry issue, and sometimes a combination.

Those editors who have printed publications know the labors involved: editing manuscripts, writing, proofreading galleys, making page dummies, reading page proof. And those with non-printed materials have similar and other problems to solve. By labor and cooperation they can be solved. For example, the *Bulletin* of the

George S. Wykoff is Professor of English at Purdue University. He is serving as chairman of the Committee on the Publications of Affiliates of the National Council of Teachers of English. We appreciate this introduction which is evidence of Dr. Wykoff's thorough knowledge and understanding of affiliate publications.

Utah Council of Teachers of English says frankly: "The UCTE *Bulletin* [4 mimeographed pages] is prepared at Jordan High School, Sandy, Utah, under the direction of Lowell J. Boberg, UCTE Corresponding Secretary. Stencils were made by Joann Smith, student; mineographing by Veda Tippetts, high school office; and mailing by members of Mr. A. LeMar Hendricksen's English classes."

The troubles and difficulties of an affiliate's publication are more than overbalanced by the advantages. Miss Virginia M. Burke, of the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, who was chairman of a subcommittee of the NCTE Committee on the Publications of Affiliates studying affiliates' newsletters, listed these virtues and advantages of affiliate publications:

"Questionnaire results show that active affiliates, large and small, have been able through their publications, however modest, to stimulate scholarship among their members; to improve the teaching of English at all levels; to influence standards of teacher preparation, certification, and load; to spread information on pertinent scholarly and pedagogical publications; to honor outstanding English students; and to work for better understanding among the three teaching levels—elementary, secondary, and college."

The foregoing is borne out by a statement by Miss Helen Throckmorton (Wichita, Kansas, Council) at the session on "Improving Our Newsletters and Bulletins" at Pittsburgh last NCTE meeting (1958): "Since the inception of our newsletters, we have obtained increased professional spirit, a striking growth in membership, and wider participation in Council activities."

With such rewards and with the kind of cooperative effort used in most publications, any affiliate of NCTE without a publication might well initiate and develop one, and bring the representation of affiliates with publications up to perfection—100%.

Such publications might also aid in pioneering. It is somewhat disconcerting, in a check of the NCTE Directory (1959), to learn that 12 of our 50 states do not now have state-wide organizations of English teachers, and that 8 of these 12 states do not have a single city, county, or area affiliate within their boundaries.

If there is any conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing facts and opinions, it is—by way of summary—that a publication of some kind, simple or elaborate, does much to strengthen an affiliate in membership, in member-interest, and—in order of climax—in greater efficiency in teaching the many facets of *that* subject known as "English," *i.e.*, the language arts.

Editors' Note: The editors of the Bulletin desire to share with you some of the best writing published in recent newsletters and bulletins of affiliates of the National Council of Teachers of English. The following are samples of many excellent articles written by teachers who have stimulating ideas, and who have been willing to share them with others.

The Poor Scholar's Soliloquy

(From office of Earl Hillbrand, Washburn University)

"No, I'm not very good in school. This is my second year in the seventh grade, and I'm bigger and taller than the other kids. They like me all right, though, even if I don't say much in the classroom, because outside I can tell them how to do a lot of things. They tag me around, and that sort of makes up for what goes on in school.

I don't know why the teachers don't like me. They never have very much. Seems like they don't think you know anything unless they can name the book it comes out of. I've got a lot of books in my room at home—books like *Popular Science*, *Mechanical Encyclopedia*, and the Sears' and Ward's catalogues—but I don't very often sit down and read them through like they make us do in school. I use my books when I want to find something out, like whenever Mom buys anything second hand I look it up in Sears' or Ward's first and tell her if she's getting stung or not. I can use the index in a hurry.

In school, though, we've got to learn whatever is in the book and I just can't memorize the stuff. Last year I stayed after school every night for two weeks trying to learn the names of the Presidents. Of course I knew some of them like Washington and Jefferson and Lincoln, but there must have been thirty altogether, and I never did get them straight.

I'm not too sorry though, because the kids who learned the Presidents had to turn right around and learn all the Vice Presidents. I am taking the seventh grade over, but our teacher this year isn't so interested in the names of the Presidents. She has us trying to learn the names of all the great American inventors.

I guess I just can't remember names in history. Anyway, this year I've been trying to learn about trucks because my uncle owns three and he says I can drive one when I'm sixteen. I already know the horsepower and number of forward and backward speeds of twenty-six American trucks, some of them Diesels, and I can spot each make a long way off. It's funny how the Diesel works.

I started to tell my teacher about it last Wednesday in science class when the pump we were using to make a vacuum in a bell jar got hot, but she didn't see what a Diesel engine had to do with our experiment on air pressure so I just kept still. The kids seemed interested though. I took four of them around to my uncle's garage after school and we saw the mechanic, Gus, tear a big Diesel truck down. Boy, does he know his stuff!

Saturday my uncle took me and his big trailer truck down state about 200 miles, and we brought back almost 10 tons of stock to the Chicago market.

He had also told me where we were going, and I had to figure out the highways to take and also the mileage. He didn't do anything but drive and turn where I told him to. Was that fun! I sat with the map in my lap and told him to turn south, or south-east, or some other direction. We made seven stops, and drove over 500 miles round trip. I'm figuring now what his oil cost, and also the wear and tear on the truck—he calls it depreciation—so we'll know how much we made.

I even write out all the bills and send letters to the farmers about what their hogs and beef cattle brought at the stockyards. I only made three mistakes in 17 letters last time, my aunt said, all commas. She's been through high school and reads them over. I wish I could write school themes that way. The last one I had to write was on, "What a Daffodil Thinks of Spring," and I just couldn't get going.

I don't do very well in school in arithmetic either. Seems I just can't keep my mind on the problems. We had one the other day like this:

If a 57-foot telephone pole falls across a cement highway so that $17\frac{3}{6}$ feet extend from one side and $14\frac{9}{17}$ feet from the other, how wide is the highway?

That seemed to me like an awfully silly way to get the width of a highway. I didn't even try to answer it because it didn't say whether the pole had fallen straight across or not.

Even in shop I don't get very good grades. All of us kids made a broom holder and a bookend this term and mine were sloppy. I just couldn't get interested. Mom doesn't use a broom any more with her new vacuum cleaner, and all our books are in a bookcase with glass doors in the parlor. Anyway, I wanted to make an end gate for my uncle's trailer, but the shop teacher said that meant using metal and wood both, and I'd have to learn how to work with wood first. I didn't see why, but I kept still and made

a tie rack at school and the tail gate after school at my uncle's garage. He said I saved him ten dollars.

Civics is hard for me, too. I've been staying after school trying to learn the "Articles of Confederation" for almost a week, because the teacher said we couldn't be good citizens unless we did. I really tried, because I want to be a good citizen. I did hate to stay after school, though, because a bunch of us boys from the south end of town have been cleaning up the old lot across from Taylor's Machine Shop to make a playground out of it for the little kids from the orphan home. I made the jungle gym from old pipe, and the guys made me Grand Mogul to keep the playground going. We raised enough money collecting scrap this month to build a wire fence clear around the lot.

Dad says I can quit school when I am fifteen, and I am sort of anxious to because there are a lot of things I want to learn how to do, and as my uncle says, 'I'm not getting any younger.'"

The New York State English Council Newsletter, October, 1958

English Accents

ZEB DENNY

Imagination—that's the key to good writing.

Some may choose to call the key by a different name, perhaps the power of suggestion. But I shall call it "Imagination"—that element in the mind which conjures up related images when a stimulus in the form of words, sounds, scenes, odors, or ideas is applied. Even in the composition of realism, it is essential.

As Tennyson saw an "ever-fading horizon," so the imaginer sees the perimeter of his vision extend itself as one idea leads on to another, and yet another. Where it leads to depends upon the alertness and the experience of the individual.

Take a look at the result of the imaginative impulse of one of our present-day writers, John Steinbeck. When he came to a place in his story "Flight" where most of us would have been tempted, and content perhaps, to say, "The night passed," he wrote: "The moon went over the sky and the surf roared on the rocks. The roosters crowed the first call. The surf subsided to a whispering surge against the reef. The moon dropped to the sea. The roosters crowed again."

In "Mending Wall" Robert Frost talks about the problem of imagination. You remember that he tried to provoke his wall-

repairing partner into an imaginative adventure, but failed, having stirred no responsive chord in the fretwork of the man's mind. But I like to think that the man, for all of his New England reticency to dwell vocally upon elves and wall-destroying gremlins, related the task of wall-repairing to an enduring good-will between his neighbor and himself. He surely pictured himself walking proudly down the future, respected by his neighbor for his insistence upon a solid rock-walled relationship between them.

Frost's co-laborer that day was but inarticulate. Locked in the recesses of his mind might have been images unheard of and unthought of by the poet. I contend that this element lies dormant, in varying degrees of course, even in the most inarticulate. The mind, given the stimulant early enough, may force the vault wherein imagination is locked to give it up, so that it may go to work. Then it may become articulate; it may become another "Frost."

But to become articulate, imagination must be cultivated. A "primrose" may be only a "primrose" to the uncultivated mind of the eleventh grader. But the mind can be led to see the "primrose's" many sides, all of which are in juxtaposition to something else. *An old giant oak may have shaded the battle weary Confederates; a river becomes the highway of the ages, its source and its destiny things to marvel at; an old woman's face, a mirror reflecting years of travail—hers and all of her loved ones.*

Cultivation demands fertilizer and work. So we must sow the seed, add the richest of our experience (vicarious or real), and work endlessly with the growing plant to keep down the weeds. To be specific, we must discuss imagination, show examples of the artist's product, and help the pupil write and rewrite again his material.

It takes a lot of blue pencils.

North Carolina English Teacher, May, 1959

Learning Punctuation—Then and Now

(A TELEVISION SKIT FOR GRADE 10)

PHYLLIS PEACOCK, Needham Broughton High School

Raleigh, North Carolina

SCENE I—THEN CIRCA 1900)

(Pupils sit in straight rows, hands clasped on desk.)

TEACHER. You are required for today to memorize the rules of punctuation. Rule 1—first recitation—Johnny.

JOHNNY. (*Recites very rapidly, without expression, indicating mere rote learning.*) "Use the comma to set off nonrestrictive clauses. If the omission of the subordinate clause would change the meaning of the principal clause or destroy its sense, the clause is restrictive, and no comma is required."

TEACHER. Word perfect, Johnny. Rule 2, Marie.

MARIE. "As a rule, the semicolon is used between the clauses of a compound sentence if they are not joined by a conjunction. These connecting words requiring semicolons are MOREOVER, CONSEQUENTLY"—(*Long pause. She fidgets, teacher scowls at her.*) "THEREFORE, BESIDES, ALSO, NEVERTHELESS, STILL, HOWEVER, OTHERWISE, LIKEWISE" (*triumphantly*).

TEACHER. Unfortunately you omitted two independent adverbs before which a semicolon is used. (*Very emphatically*) THUS and HENCE. (*Puts a little zero in her book.*)

MARIE. But I don't think THUS and HENCE are very important. I don't even know what they mean . . .

MAX. I don't see any sense in these rules anyway.

TEACHER. Max! Marie! You are out of order! If you memorize these rules, some day when you write an important paper you will know how to PUNCTUATE. . . . (*She rings a bell. Pupils line up and march out stiffly.*)

SCENE II—NOW (1958)

(*Pupils cross to semicircle of chairs. One goes to desk to take attendance; Ann passes out papers. Margaret goes to blackboard as secretary. As teacher and pupils begin the following dialogue, Margaret writes on the blackboard.*)

Today we are discussing punctuation and we are using the psychological approach to it.

TEACHER. Before you read to the class the interesting compositions which Ann is handing back, certain statements must be cleared up. See if you can find the statements that are not clear to the reader. Sometimes you fail to put up the traffic signals that will tell the reader to stop. By the way, what are the stop signals in a composition?

TOMMY. The stop signals are the period, question mark and the exclamation mark. Of course, if you want to suggest strong feeling or suggest that your character yelled his remark you show the stop by using the exclamation mark. The semicolon is a stop, too. The semicolon is really a period; only it is used between

two complete ideas when there's no "BUT" or "AND" to join the two statements.

TEACHER. Can you give us an example of the semicolon as a stop sign where there is no "AND"?

TOMMY. Well—if Margaret takes the "AND" out of that sentence on the board, she ought to warn the reader to stop by putting in a semicolon.

MARGARET. Like this? (*She erases "AND", putting in semicolon.*)

FRED. Reads better with the semicolon. "AND" sounds childish anyway.

TEACHER. Do you *really* believe these stop signs are important?

CHARLES. Yes, I found an example of a very old writing in a book. The author just ran on and never put in a warning to show a turn in the thought or a single stop signal. At the end he printed a lot of punctuation marks with the sign "Pepper and salt to please your taste." (*Laughter.*)

TEACHER. Why not? Why should we bother to put in all these marks?

BOBBY. Why we have to, today, Miss Bowling! Readers are accustomed to being warned to stop. They want to be warned, "Now here is a turn in the thought" or "Here come the exact words my character used."

PHIL. And they want to know at once what words are unimportant—which ones can be left out. We have to put commas around the parts that are just "tucked in," so the reader knows that the remainder of the sentence is the important thought.

JACK. *Sure!* (*Teacher looks at him*)—I mean—er—certainly—. Readers today haven't time to read slowly. People read fast today because they read by phrases and punctuation helps them to phrase. People today haven't time to "salt and pepper."

PHIL. Besides, punctuation is just courtesy to the reader. It's just er—er—well, what every reader *expects*. An employer expects an employee to punctuate as naturally and as correctly as he adds figures.

FRED. You mean it's just conventional!

JACK. *Sure!* If you went to the store to buy butter and it was handed to you in old newspaper, you wouldn't buy it. Why, you'd be disgusted. Customers expect service—courtesies. If we don't do what's expected in this modern age we're—just er—er—well, our letters of application just go into the waste basket—we're considered—er—er—

FRED. You mean if we don't punctuate so the reader can travel along smoothly without backing up or being misled—we're just considered illiterate.

JACK. Yeah! . . . I mean Yes!

TEACHER. You sound quite convincing about the *need* for punctuation. Can you *prove* that an end mark changes the meaning?

SARAH. How about the passage you showed us in that old play—Ralph Somebody?—I forget the name.

ANN. Wasn't it *Ralph Roister Doister*?

SARAH. Yes. Well, Ralph wrote a love letter, and his friend who liked the girl, too, changed just a few periods and semicolons.

TEACHER. Margaret, weren't you going to mimeograph those passages for us?

MARGARET. Here they are! (*Passes out mimeograph sheets.*)

TEACHER. Because the lady was rich, Ralph wanted to tell her that he did not love her merely for her lands and riches. Read what Ralph wrote, Shirley, and then read it as his rival punctuated.

SHIRLEY. (*Reads*).

Sweete mistresse, I love you, nothing at all
Regarding your substance and riches: chief of all
For your personage, beautie, demeanour and wit
I commend me unto you, never awhit
Sorie to hear report of your good welfare.

His friend Merrygreek read it to her like this: (*Reads slowly*)

Sweete mistress, I love you nothing at all;
(*Class smiles, some laugh.*)

Regarding your substance and riches chief of all;
For your personage, beautie, demeanour and wit,
I commend me unto you never a whit.
Sorie to hear report of your good welfare.

TOMMY. (*Softly*) Pretty smart guy!

SARAH. As Fred would say, you mean he knew his punctuation marks.

TEACHER. (*Holds up huge cardboards.*) No reader can tolerate such mental collisions as these, for example. (*Pupil reads each in turn, putting in semicolon.*)

Then the storm broke the windows and doors rattled alarmingly.

The Indian Toti went off by himself to eat the rattlesnakes and the lizards squirming uneasily in the fragile box at my elbow rather spoiled my appetite.

I knew that on the seventeenth I had to butcher my

wife wanted to finish the meat canning before the family reunion.

(For the last few minutes Becky has been perusing a composition.)

BECKY. *(Waving hand wildly.)* Sarah didn't mean this!

CHARLES. What's wrong?

SARAH. What's the matter?

(Everyone turns and looks at Sarah.)

BECKY. She's written something that's not true—"Woman without her man is a savage."

GIRLS. *(All together, turning accusingly at Sarah)* "Of course not!" "Why, Sarah!" "What does she mean?" "Imagine that!" "She is not!"

TEACHER. *(Turns to girl at the board.)* Will you write it as Sarah has written it?

MARGARET. *(At the board, she peers quickly at Lenore's pointing finger, writes rapidly in large letters.)*

WOMAN WITHOUT HER MAN IS A SAVAGE

SARAH. Well, I can fix *that* in a hurry. *(Writes)* Woman! Without her, man is a savage.

CHARLES. *(Waving hand.)* Something queer here, too.

TEACHER. I thought you would find these so I asked Margaret to put them on the board.

BOBBY. Unveil 'em, Margaret! *(Margaret takes down the sheet of white paper covering several sentences.)*

TEACHER. Now, Clarke. Read these just as they were written by your classmates.

(All look at board on which are some amusing sentences. Various pupils with colored chalk change the meaning by changing punctuation.)

CLARKE. *(Reading.)* If you would put the window up the chimney wouldn't smoke.

BRADLEY. That's what Bill meant when he said that we have to warn the reader where the subordinate part ends and the real statement begins.

TEACHER. What *is* the real statement?

BRADLEY. "The chimney wouldn't smoke." The reader wants to be warned by a comma. It's like leaving a train switch open. There'll be a *mental* collision if you don't warn the reader.

MARGARET. *(Appealing to teacher.)* What does Bradley mean?

TEACHER. Why, she means if you don't warn the reader the train of thought will run dangerously far onto the main line. There

may be a collision, a wreck of the thought. *Your mind has to back up.* The reader always resents the delay and confusion of such shifting. He would like definite assurance at the point where the meaning switches. The *comma* warns him that *here is a switch in the thought.* Margaret, put in the commas and avoid collision. Say what you want to say. Then punctuate your sentences so that the reader can interpret them that way.

(*Bell. Class rises, laughing.*)

North Carolina English Teacher, October, 1958

Teaching Critical Thinking

EDGAR DALE, Ohio State University

Most of us would be pleased if described as a person who thinks for himself. Critical thinking is an educational goal as acceptable as good health. *The New York Times* for November 10, 1953, says: "This principle ought to be hammered home. It ought to be understood on campuses and everywhere else. We are in no danger, now or ever, of too much thinking. The danger lies in the peanut-sized brain and foghorn-sized voice and then only if we put them in positions of power. The cure is more education, not less."

There are two alternatives to critical thinking in a society which is changing abruptly and disruptively. One is to think with your blood, as Hitler put it. The other is to turn the thinking over to a few smart men because, as many believe, today's problems seem too big for the ordinary man to solve.

What is critical thinking anyway? It is thinking which criticizes not only the means used to reach goals but the goals themselves. It is meeting a forked-road situation for which no neat, exact road map already exists. It is the kind of sustained thinking necessary to deal adequately with such questions as: Shall I study law or go into my father's business? How can I improve my teaching? What must the United States do to continue to be a great nation? Should Antigone have been loyal to her dead brother, Polynices, or to her country?

Four major abilities in teaching critical thinking in the social sciences are noted by Dressel and Mayhew: (1) to identify central issues, (2) to recognize underlying assumptions, (3) to evaluate evidence or authority, and (4) to draw warranted conclusions. Item (3) noted above, "to evaluate evidence or authority," is subdivided into these abilities: to recognize stereotypes and clichés, to

recognize bias and emotional factors in a presentation, to distinguish between relevant and non-relevant, to distinguish between essential and incidental, to recognize the adequacy of data, to determine whether facts support a generalization, and to check consistency.

Admittedly the thinking abilities here noted are not simple or easily achieved. Nevertheless they have simple beginnings, and critical thinking can and must be an objective of both the elementary and the high school.

Who is doing the thinking in the elementary and high school? Is there evidence, for example, that boys and girls in the second grade are collecting data and drawing inferences about how people in a city or village depend on each other? When the children in the sixth grade visited the historical museum did they make some sound inferences as to the way Indians lived in Ohio 500 years ago—their food, housing, source of fire? Did their inferences agree with those of their friends, with the pamphlets written by archaeologists? Did the children pool their facts and build some supportable generalizations?

In the arithmetic class are children making suitable inferences about the number system, discovering the meaning of the decimal system, the importance of place value, drawing valid conclusions of their own? Were some of the abler junior-senior students challenged to find short-cut methods of multiplying or dividing, to look at arithmetic creatively rather than routinely?

What about creative thinking in the high school English class? John C. Adler, a teacher of English in Westport, Connecticut, writes me that he is "trying to find a way to get the children to tap their springs of creativity and fluidity, and still keep within the bounds of the positive, the additive, and the useful." He says:

I've begun to fumble about. I've said, for instance, to a class which is reading *A Tale of Two Cities*, "Let's write a short character sketch of Lucy Manette." Groans. "We'll do it on the blackboard; everybody chimes in." Groans. "Relax." Someone pipes up: "A girl with blond hair." I write it on the board. "Dr. Manette's pretty daughter." I write it on the board. "A girl who needs someone to help her."

Ah! There's your thesis sentence! "Lucy Manette is a girl who needs someone to help her." Can you ask for more? And the rest follows—original, penetrating, full of imagery. It is their own—they aren't mouthing what they think should be said. The girl who needed someone to help

her stimulated them to write originally because that area beginning somewhere one-half inch below the skull gave it to them, and coming from their *creative unconsciousness*, it was theirs. It stimulated them as no green-on-white typographed textbook can ever do.

Many opportunities exist for teaching critical thinking in reading. Indeed all reading includes the making of inferences not only as to the amount of weight to be given a particular word or phase in a sentence but also as to what the sentences themselves mean when put together in a paragraph. And when we apply what we have read to the solution of a problem, we face again a thinking situation.

Boys and girls need to experience the fact of highly variant interpretations of the same reading material. Probably, few would read "the early bird catches the worm" with a worm's-eye view and thus conclude that it is best to be a slug-a-bed. But we do know that many college students interpret "a rolling stone gathers no moss" as favorable advice to avoid being a mossback and to pick up a fine polish.

Creative thinking will be improved if pupils in the junior and senior high schools develop some elementary competencies in statistics. They can do simple polls within the school itself and note the errors that may creep in when safeguards are not set up. They can learn that in controlled experiments with new drugs, co-operating doctors may not know whether they are administering real drugs or sugar pills.

Abler students can report on the polling methods used by Gallup and others and note the techniques used to get adequate samples of the adult population. They can evaluate the methods used to obtain data on television habits. They can learn that statistics are sometimes used the way a drunk uses a lamp-post, for support rather than for illumination.

There are many statistical traps for the uncritical reader. It is said that the rich and poor both experience the same average amounts of cold weather but that the poor get theirs in the winter and the rich get theirs in the summer. You can drown in water which averages two feet in depth. An Ohio high school senior told a college interviewer that he was not in the upper half of his class but added helpfully, "You know there aren't as many in the upper half as there used to be."

If a critically-minded student in a high school library class asked, "How do we know whether an event occurred the way the

author described it?" he would be facing the question of historical evidence. How does a good historian act when he deals with an event in which he is personally involved? Lord Acton instructed the contributors to the *Cambridge Modern History* to write as if established "in Long. 30 degrees W." in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. The critical thinker, like the historian, must make a conscious and stubborn effort to get the truth.

Is logic enough? Does it meet all the needs of critical and creative thinking? Is it true, as Harold Lasswell notes in *Psychopathology and Politics*, that:

The ultimate paradox of logical thinking is that it asserts its own prerogatives by clamping down certain restrictive frames of reference upon the activity of the mind, and presently ends in impoverishing the activity which it purports to guide into creative channels. It becomes intolerant of the immediate, unanalyzed, primitive abundance of the mind, and by so doing destroys its own source.

The noted inventor Charles Kettering said it more pungently: "Logic enables you to go wrong systematically." Our classifications can become too tight, too neat, too rigid. And critical thinking thus helps us avoid becoming prisoners of our past perceptions. Men and societies that can bend, won't break.

Wisconsin English Journal, October, 1959

A Boy's Essay On Anatomy

ANONYMOUS STUDENT

Your head is kind of round and hard, and your brains are in it and your hair is on it. Your face is the front of your head where you eat and make faces. Your neck is what keeps your head out of your collar. It's hard to keep clean. Your shoulders are sort of shelves where you hook your suspenders on them.

Your stummick is something that if you do not eat often enough it hurts, and spinach don't help none. Your spine is a long bone in your back and that keeps you from folding up. Your back is always behind you no matter how quick you turn around. Your arms you got to have to pitch with and so you can reach the butter.

Your fingers stick out of your hand so you can throw a curve and add up rithmatick. Your legs is what if you have not got two of you cannot get to first base. Your feet are what you run on,

and your toes are what always gets stubbed. And that's all there is of you, except what's inside, and I never saw that.

Denver Area English Council Newsletter, March, 1959

These Will Strengthen Teaching

PATTIE PARKER, Columbia, South Carolina

JOSEPH MERSAND, NCTE President, Jamaica High School,
Long Island, New York

Strong motivation is half your battle. Try to devise good reasons for wanting to write well.

Preparation for writing may be as important as the act of writing itself.

The proper environment for writing usually produces better work.

We all learn to write by writing—not by listening to a lecture on writing, reading a textbook, or filling in exercises in a workbook.

Give students class time in which to write.

Encourage revision (the hardest task of all).

Short papers are easier to correct and can contribute much to some particular phases of writing.

Originality and forcefulness of expression are sometimes to be prized more than correctness. Encourage pupils to express whatever they wish. Assure them that their work will be read sympathetically and evaluated fairly. An ounce of praise may sometimes do more than a pound of censure.

Intergrate writing with other language arts activities. A story, play, or TV program may inspire many. A vivid experience may be even better.

Submit student's best compositions to magazines, contests, and high school anthologies.

Work together (as a class) on two or three special skits or programs during the year for presentation in assembly, at organization meetings, or on the local radio station.

Do some writing yourself. It will help in your understanding of pupils' writing problems.

Develop a respect for writing that will be felt throughout the school.

English Language Arts in Wisconsin, September 25, 1959

To English Teachers

SISTER MARY HESTER, SSND,
Mount Mary College, Milwaukee

Japan and cherry blossoms call
I see but papers by my side;
They must be marked by next roll
call . . .
How white the road—how dull
inside!

Bagdad and Cairo draped in
dreams . . .
Infinitives they split and dangle.
Their *Tanner* is remote. And beams
Of gossamer sunlight glint in tangle!

Jerusalem . . . anemones . . .
I sit and mark drab tasks instead!
Romance drifts in on spring-soaked
breeze . . .
I mark Gail Hopkins "D" in red.

Wisconsin English Journal, March, 1959

The Case for Oral Poetry

ANNA LEE STENSLAND, Stout State College,
Menomonie, Wisconsin

Got the t-e-a-m, on the b-e-a-m,
Got the f-i-v-e, on the j-i-v-e,
Got the team, that's on the beam
And the five on the jive, so
Come on, boys and skin 'em alive!

Most high school and college teachers of English see little connection between this display of loyal enthusiasm and the English classroom. Yet is it not possible that there is something here that the teacher of poetry can learn? The students love these cheers. Their eyes glisten; their hands clap; every nerve is alive. How different is the usual scene in the English classroom when the subject of poetry is introduced!

True, high school cheers are not great poetry. But they do have many of the elements of poetry: rhyme, rhythm, emotion. It is with these elements that we usually begin the study of poetry in the English classroom. There is not a large gap between these cheers and Kipling's "Boots" or Lindsay's "Congo." The appeal in both poems is to sound and rhythm.

The earliest poetry known to man was not written; it was passed on from one generation to another by word of mouth. It was a public exercise of man's loves, hates and hopes. Homer, the songs of the meistersingers, and the English ballads were all heard in public performance. Much of the joy was in the audience reaction. As the poet sang, the audience joined in by chanting and singing along, clapping their hands, and showing their approval or disapproval. In our own English tradition, Chaucer wrote the *Canterbury Tales* and Shakespeare his verse drama with a vocal audience in mind, an audience which would react—do something.

In a similar manner today, the three-year-old lisps his nursery rhymes for the appreciation of parents and adult friend and claps his hands and giggles at the sounds he hears himself make. The seven-year-olds sing and chant at many of their games. High school and college students chant their teams on to victory. The joy of sound and the sharing of sound is there, too, in teen-age slang. What other appeal was there a few years ago in the popular "See you later, alligator," or "Where ya' bound, hound?" Let no one think that adults are immuned to this love of sound. Such radio and television commercials as "Dad's old-fashioned root beer" or "Whiz-z-z—the best candy bar that there is-s-s" were not written only for children.

The appeal of oral sound has not all been on such a low level in modern times. One of the hopeful signs that poetry is not lost to modern generations is the success which the New York Museum of Modern Art has had with its programs of poets reading their own poems. Capacity crowds turned out to hear Marianne Moore, W. H. Auden, e. e. cummings, William Carlos Williams, Robert Frost, and Dylan Thomas. Radio and television have also noted some success with poetry and verse drama.

The conclusion seems obvious. Poetry in the classroom has become, too much of the time, a silent, individual activity. A poem is assigned to students to read outside of class. The next day the facts of the author's life and the historical period are discussed; the poem's meaning, the author's technique, the imagery are analyzed. When this is completed, time has run out. We must go

on to the next literary masterpiece. The student has understood intellectually; he has perhaps answered questions dutifully, but there has been no overt, emotional response—no delight in sound, rhyme, and rhythm. He will not read poetry again, except under compulsion.

There are many ways of making sure that students hear poetry. All English teachers unfortunately are not good readers of poetry. It should be the responsibility of every English teacher to become as good a reader of poetry as it is possible for him to become. He can do this on his own time with practice before a mirror and with a tape recorder. There are also courses in interpretive reading available at almost every teacher-training institution. Every college student who expects to teach English should be strongly urged, perhaps even required, to take such a course.

The method which comes closest to poetry as it was originally enjoyed is that of choral reading. There are many variations of this. Some teachers prefer to have all students read together, in some cases clapping hands or stamping feet. Others will single out some of the better students to read solo parts with the chorus joining in. And often an elaborate performance can be produced by testing for light and dark voices. This is group activity which allows the display of enthusiasm and emotion without the self-consciousness often accompanying the solo reading of poetry.

Students must read aloud individually, too. The poor reader should have his turn, even though it is only a verse or two which he rehearses with the teacher before he presents it. Poems must be heard, but there is added enjoyment for the student when he makes the sounds himself. There is no substitute for this. The poems chosen for average and poor students to read need not be the most difficult to read or the most subtle in meaning. But somewhere there is a poem which even the poorest student in the class will like well enough to read well.

Invaluable to the teacher are the many fine recordings of poetry. Some critics have argued that the poet is not always the best one to read his works. This may be true, but such a recording does have a certain authority which we cannot deny. The fact remains that many of the poets are good readers. In addition, there are the many first-rate actors who have given us vivid and realistic interpretations of the best poetry of our literary tradition.

Music as an approach to poetry should not be neglected. Many of the poems we want to teach have been set to music which can be sung by the students or heard by recording. Musicians and poets

have often been influenced by similar natural phenomena, themes or emotions, and similar artistic movements. Hearing a poem and a musical number inspired by similar emotions often enhances appreciation.

Poetry does not make its appeal to the eyes but to the ears. Yet, too often students see much more poetry than they ever hear. They may hear *about* poetry, but they do not hear poetry. Let us not be so high-brow that we cannot learn from the results our high school cheer leaders, children's nursery rhymes, and radio commercials achieve. Poetry is intended to be heard.

Wisconsin English Journal, March, 1959

Friends, Romans, Students of English II

GENEVIEVE BOUCHER, Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High

(with apologies to Mr. Shakespeare)

Friends, Romans, Students of English II, lend me your
ears!

Exams are upon us . . . some of you have spoke of them
as if they were some fearful thing . . .

Some have even said, "If we have tears prepare to shed
them now" . . .

I think it is not meet that you should begin this English
exam with such misgivings.

Bear with me. Let me tell you what perchance shall
set your minds at rest.

Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,

It seems to me most strange that students should fear

Seeing that exams, a necessary end,

Will come when they will come.

However if yet you have a mind

That fears them much and your misgiving still

Falls shrewdly to the purpose

and these tests seem Greek to you . . .

Console yourselves! Remember you are not alone . . .

Students everywhere now . . . and later will be
suffering same as you.

Yeah . . . how many ages hence

Shall this our lofty scene be acted over

And exams taken in accents even yet unknown!

You are not yet convinced?

Bend your ear closer. I do not doubt your reasons
Are good. However

Good reasons must, of force, give place to better.
They say the knowledge of some increaseth every
day . . . but . . .

We at the height are ready to decline
(Better get these exams over before
you forget).

Of course I realize that sometimes
some of you had rather be a Lake Lure
Villager

Than to repute yourself a student
Under these hard conditions as this exam time
is like to lay upon you.

I am no orator as Brutus was . . . sometimes I fear
I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,
Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech
to stir your blood to study. . . .

I do not wish to put you in servile fearfulness, but
sometimes I feel like saying

"Do not presume too much upon my love.

I may do that I'm sorry for."

(You know . . . maybe *D* instead of *B*!)
and also

I will admit there have been times when you
Hath given me some worthy cause to wish
Things done. Undone . . . yet if you pass these exams
I shall be satisfied.

I do not see why you should fear these exams.

I had as lief not live as live to be

In awe of such a thing as a little old exam. . . .

"Make the exams easy! Do away with them entirely!"
for this present

I would not, so with love I might entreat you
Be any further mov'd. What you have said I will con-
sider;

What you have to say I will with patience hear, and
find a time

Both meet to hear and answer such high things.

(What say May 28 at 2 P. M.?)

Really this *slight* exam won't be too bad . . .
once you've started it you won't mind.

It's just between the announcing of this dreadful
testing

And the first motion of it that all of this interim is

Like a phantasma or a hideous dream. . . .

How many questions:

O somewhere round fifty or one

hundred . . .

just a slight exam. . . .

Hard questions?

Well . . . yes . . . if you don't know them!

It appeareth they could even dangerous be

to the midterm average, that is. . . .

But don't get me wrong. . . .

I rather tell thee what is to be feared (by thee)

Than what *I* fear;

For *always I am the teacher!*

(And have not this exam to take . . .

thank goodness!)

North Carolina English Teacher, May, 1958

The High School Reading Program

CAROLYN CARTER, Altavista High School, Altavista, Virginia

Since I first began teaching English in high school, I have been deeply concerned about what procedure to follow in directing students in parallel reading. My experience as a librarian made me even more aware of the many different approaches and attitudes toward the subject among the teachers in a single school. I kept observing and trying to reach some definite conclusions about the requirements of a good program in outside reading. Believing that the primary and the ultimate objective of teaching literature is to develop in the students such a genuine love of reading good books for pleasure that they will continue to read throughout their lives, I felt the need to evaluate my own program in order to make changes for accomplishing this worthwhile objective. Upon studying the recommendations of some of the authorities in this field of the language arts, I readily realized that there had been many weaknesses in this phase of my work, and I set about making changes.

One of the main requirements of a good parallel reading program is teacher guidance. Many teachers are reluctant to take class time for this needed instruction, and every librarian is familiar with the

bewildered pupil who has been sent to the library to choose any book he likes but who has come without any previous instruction or guidance by the teacher. Lucia B. Mirrielees states in her book *Teaching Composition and Literature* that this practice is "too much like sending the untrained pupil to the dictionary." A good librarian joyfully accepts the responsibility for helping these children find a suitable book, but often the timid ones slip in unnoticed and go out with a book that will be disappointing.

What devices and methods might be employed to insure proper guidance of the pupils in their reading? The pupil-teacher conference, during which the authors and the titles of the books read are recorded on the pupil's individual reading record card, is one of the most widely recommended means of reading guidance. The record serves as a guide to the teacher in making suggestions to balance each pupil's reading, widen his horizons, and offer variety in subjects and types. When brief annotations by the pupils are entered on the cards, they can be used by all other pupils in choosing interesting books.

The reading dairy, in which daily reading of all types is entered, also serves as a good basis for guidance. This type of record offers excellent opportunity for the teacher to bring newspapers and magazines into the program and to give needed guidance in these important types of reading.

Class discussions of books and authors, access to written reviews in newspapers and magazines, recommendations and reviews by teachers and librarians will help pupils choose enjoyable and worthwhile books. Class exchange of books among pupils, attractive bulletin board displays advertising books, and sampling and browsing in class and school libraries play an important part in the guidance of pupils.

The importance of reading lists varied enough to meet the individual differences in abilities, backgrounds, and interests cannot be minimized. The book *Conducting Experiences in English* by a committee of the National Council of Teachers of English suggests that pupils form committees according to reading interests and prepare lists of books centering around these interests. Mirrielees stresses the value of cumulative reading lists prepared jointly by teacher and pupils as a year's undertaking.

In striving to put the right book into the hands of the right child through the proper guidance, a teacher must constantly examine her program to see that each pupil is taking some initiative and responsibility for choice of his reading materials. Lou LaBrant

in *We Teach English* stresses the importance of this principle in developing people who will be intelligent readers after they leave school, and points out that rigid and fixed reading lists tend to prevent the achievement of this goal. The Commission on the English Curriculum of the National Council of Teachers of English in *The English Language Arts in the Secondary School* discusses "progressive experiences in choosing" and says that "wide individual reading with opportunity to choose, reject, or accept from among a wealth of possibilities is the essential basis for the habit of turning to books as sources of information, relaxation, and inspiration." Those who have had no part in choosing books in school will likely be so helpless in later life that they will continue to expect books to be placed in their hands by a book club or a librarian.

Another basic requirement of a successful parallel reading set-up is that it must take into account individual differences to such an extent that each child will achieve satisfaction from his reading. Only thus will he continue to read after he leaves school, and this goal, after all, is what each teacher is trying to reach. Unfortunately, many children in our high school English classes are poor readers, and some have given up all hope of finding pleasure from books. If a teacher can in some way help these pupils to enjoy vivid experiences in reading, she will surely be preparing them for a richer and fuller life. LaBrant suggests that with some students there might be justification for starting with something of little literary value to make them aware that reading can be fun.

No discussion of parallel reading would be complete without mentioning follow-up activities. Herein lies the weakness in many otherwise worthwhile programs. All authors from whose books I have read concerning this subject discourage the practice of requiring written work as a follow-up of parallel reading. I like Mirrielees' criticism of the special testing day on parallel reading. She refers to it as a "literary Judgment Day when the just and the unjust are tried," and further states that the "best method of reporting upon books read calls for no composition." She contends that reading becomes a task when students are required to give written reports, and deplores the fact that teachers "concocted" the type of writing known as "book reports." Gertrude B. Stearns in *English in the Small High School* takes the attitude that written reports interfere with pleasure because the pupils read for the book report.

Having required written reports in the past on parallel reading, I have begun to wonder whether I could do it any more with a

clear conscience. I am not convinced that written reports necessarily prevent a pupil from enjoying his reading. Writers who are opposed to written reports have not hesitated to advocate oral reports as a follow-up of reading, but I cannot overlook the fact that the oral assignment would interfere with some pupils' pleasure much more than the written report. Although I am definitely opposed to written tests on parallel reading on specified days, I believe that I shall continue to assign occasional written book reports to offer needed training in composition. I believe that pupils have been led to expect some form of follow-up of most school activities, and parallel reading is no exception.

Other types of follow-up activities, however, will be necessary to offer the needed variety so strongly recommended by a number of authorities. Making the book report a private discussion between the teacher and the pupil is recommended by several. Conventional book reviews in the form of dialogues offer good training in oral English. Panel discussions by students who have read the same book or different books on the same subjects add variety. What better opportunity could one find for training in narration than vivid retelling of an exciting incident from a good book? Unlimited possibilities lie in pupil suggestions developing into a class book club. Using these varied types of follow-up activities, properly spaced, should make reporting as well as reading a pleasure.

Virginia English Bulletin, December, 1958

Is This An Answer?

ROBERT PICKERING, Cumberland High School

Over a bowl of chili in the cafeteria, I was asked by the yearbook advisor if I could summarize my idea of English studies in one sentence. To me, this was easy. For years I have felt that English is a tool, not an end in itself; hence my answer was: "Language is a tool with which we may discover the ideas of the past and present, and by which we carve out in complex hieroglyphics our reactions to these ideas as well as our own ideas of life."

I could go on with the usual platitudes about the beauty of expression, the rhythm of language, etc., but I think we all know that many powerful, though not necessarily good, ideas have been expressed by men with little or none of the beauty of style we tell our students are included in the classics.

Our textbooks and our libraries have these classics, and we should use them; but where can we get down to the basic facts of life expressed in language that the average high school student can understand? The answer, to me, is the inexpensive paperbacks.

All of us have seen blue jeans walking down the corridor with a paperback sticking out of the back pocket. So (much as I dislike the word motivation), grab this thing the youngsters have taken to heart: the paperback. Work their popularity to your advantage; show them that even in some of the poorer novels there is some merit; work them until you find that when students ask someone to read page so-and-so, it is not for the smut they looked for before, but because of an idea that has something to do with a philosophy of life. It can be done. How successfully? Well, that is difficult to say, but get the edge of the knife in and the blade will follow.

The question is how to get the edge in? I have used the method of asking whether a class would like to study a single text book novel, such as *The House of Seven Gables*, or whether they would prefer to spend a little money and study a more modern novel in a paperback edition. The answer is invariably in favor of the paperback. From there it is a simple matter of suggesting two or three books you think might be good and letting the students choose one among them.

By the above method, you still have control of their reading choice. I have used such paperbacks as: *The Bridge at Toko-Ri*, *The Little World of Don Camillo*, *The Last Englishman*, *Animal Farm*. This year I will use either *1984* or *Darkness at Noon* for my seniors and *The Pearl* for my juniors. With this method I do not ignore the classics; I assign them to students who can handle them and discuss them in class.

As you can see, there is a great variety possible in selection. I teach these books more for ideas than style. I believe that to really read a book, one must have a pencil beside him to underline significant passages, and to write in the margins. When they do this with school texts, the students are charged for defacing school property. This is defacing? No! This is learning to read properly.

School policies forbid writing in books because it cuts down the life of the book. However, with the huge numbers in classes using the books, it would teach the readers to see what others think worthwhile, not only what they see themselves. With the paperbacks this problem disappears. I never use the same book twice. They go around the classes anyway. While reading these books the students must learn, and memorize, at least two different philosophies

of the author and be prepared to discuss them in terms of their own beliefs and background. Even the slower students, with a little guidance, can pick out some ideas that they can understand and defend or attack. As these books usually cover something in the realm of their immediate interest, they feel that they have the necessary knowledge to discuss it; and they do! In fact the discussions sometimes become quite heated and need a guiding hand to keep them fairly calm and rational.

Another technique I have used, with a smaller group of gifted students, is to make a list of good paperbacks, then let each student choose one that he might like to teach. They have picked such books as *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Of Human Bondage*, *Keys of the Kingdom*, *The Late George Apley*, *Mainstreet* and many others. This has proved very successful. In this method a book is really read. No student wants to feel that he is doing a poor job; they dig, literally dig, things out of the book that we teachers have not found. Philosophies, styles, fallacies; just about everything is brought out to the other students' eyes. I have the students take notes in a college manner, and allow them to question the student teacher at the end of his lectures. I usually try to limit him to three days; and, if they take the whole three days, it is not time wasted. Not only do the others get practice in taking notes, but they usually borrow the books and read them, immediately or through the summer. With small groups I believe this is one of the best methods I have used.

I also use paperbacks in "Free-reading." Mondays being a rather dull day, I have free-reading. Considering the small price of the paperback, it is possible for a library with limited resources to reach the interest level of every student. Think of the library you can have in your classroom for practically nothing. Ten dollars will put about twenty books on your shelves; the students will add many of their own. These books cover reading levels from the fifth grade to the college level in the classics.

Probably the most difficult thing about the above method is convincing some teachers, who allow students to read *Moby Dick* or *A Tale of Two Cities* in a study hall, that it is not a sin for some to be reading Max Brand's *Silvertop's Search* in the same study hall. They will usually accept it when they discover that the student who is reading it for my class is one who cannot yet really *read* anything much heavier. Of course, this method requires that one must try to guide even the poorer students to a little better type of book. For instance, some of Will James' books about the West will give

a less glamorized picture of the cowboy's life; girls who would like to be nurses should read something besides *Sue Barton, Student Nurse*.

I am sure you can see these and many other advantages in the use of the paperbacks; now all you have to do is to convince the public and, sometimes, the school administration that there are good books in the paperback editions.

Wisconsin English Journal, March, 1959

Thirty Years to a More Powerful Vocabulary

RALPH M. WARDLE, University of Omaha

Most teachers of English are dubious of the merits of such a get-smart-quick scheme as that presented in the paperback *Thirty Days to a More Powerful Vocabulary*. Experience has taught us that vocabulary building is a process measured in years rather than days. Our own vocabularies have grown, and continue to grow, from our reading; and the best advice we can give our students is "Read, *read*, READ! And keep at it as long as you live."

Unfortunately giving them that advice is not enough. Before they act on it, we must make them *want* to read. We must convince them that reading is not a chore. And we are addressing a generation which has innumerable distractions—especially that one great distraction spelled with a capital T and a capital V.

Those of us who love to read may fail to realize that, to many students, reading is a chore. I myself had never been fully aware of the fact until one day when (having forgotten to give the assignment in advance) I asked a freshman class to read James Thurber's hilarious "Catbird Seat" to themselves so that we could discuss the story.—As they began reading, I sat back to watch their reaction. To my amazement there was none. They screwed up their faces, they gritted their teeth, they twisted their forelocks; but not a laugh or a chuckle escaped from a single one of them. And why? Primarily, I believe, because they were not used to reading for pleasure—or even seeing others do so. A kindergarten teacher told me recently that many of her pupils (drawn from a better-than-average residential area) have no notion of how to handle a book—how to open it, even. Apparently they have never seen their parents read books; and it is quite possible that they may reach high school age without ever having seen anyone *enjoy* a book.

It might behoove us as English teachers to take time to read to our students now and again, helping them to discern the overtones

of meaning, but primarily letting them see how much we enjoy reading and how they can, too. I grant: not all will be stimulated to read by the example of an English teacher. But some may make a discovery which they will profit from as long as they live.

If they make that discovery, we must confirm it by helping them to find books that they can enjoy. And we should strive to rouse in them an interest in words. There are all sorts of word-games that the high school teacher may use in this process: cross-word puzzles, anagrams, Scrabble, and the like. Or they can try such exercises as asking for variations on a simple statement like "The car went down the street." ("The jalopy rattled down the alley" and "The convertible zoomed down the avenue" are likely variations, and they can be elaborated with adjectives and adverbs or modified by experiments in connotation.) Students might even be asked to try their hands at verse—preferably in rhyme and regular meter, which create special problems in the choice of words. They should be encouraged also to enroll in foreign language courses, where they are confronted with similar demands in translation. And always we must urge them to keep their dictionaries near at hand and in use whenever they sit down to study for any of their courses, and we must check on their use of the dictionary in English assignments by giving them frequent vocabulary tests. I have found that students take these more seriously if I tell them the results of Johnson O'Connor's study of the correlation of vocabulary and success in later life.

But these are random suggestions. Other teachers will have other methods, and each will naturally feel most enthusiasm for his or her own methods. If we believe that reading is fun and that words are interesting, we can certainly launch our students on their search for a more powerful vocabulary. A vocabulary will last thirty years, at least, rather than thirty days; but the results are guaranteed good for a lifetime.

The Nebraska English Counselor, March, 1959

Highlights of Senior English for Superior Students

PHYLLIS PEACOCK, Needham Broughton High School,
Raleigh, North Carolina

Whether we are working with a few outstanding students in a class heterogeneous in ability or with an entire class of superior seniors we find that they need stimulation:

Not more but more challenging activities
New ideas, new ways of treating traditional materials
Emphasis on "power-to-do," not accumulation of facts
Challenge to do *extensive* reading
Challenge to do *intensive* reading
A great variety of written work to gain power in analyzing,
organizing, and thinking creatively
Extensive vocabulary growth

When it becomes obvious that certain seniors are fairly mature in their thinking and correct and fairly effective in self-expression, more challenging activities can gradually be substituted for the "regular" senior assignments. Extensive reading, intensive reading culminating in a documented theme (not a library-paper), lecturettes, creative writing, and original "group scripts"—all these activities have been required in the past year of certain superior English seniors at Needham Broughton High School. The quality of performance in these activities differed widely. Almost everyone, however, performed exceptionally well in one or more of these assignments.

LECTURETTES ON INTENSIVE READING

"What can you learn about the domestic life of the Greeks from the *Odyssey*? What foibles of civilization can you find satirized in *Gulliver's Travels*?" From a long list of such questions the senior and teacher, in conference, select reading appropriate to the student's ability in reading and sufficiently challenging. No reading of literary criticism is permitted; the senior finds his material in the book, not in books about the book.

Recently a boy of ability but in his words "allergic to symbolism and literary obscurity" read carefully *Grapes of Wrath*. His lecture to the class dealt with conditions among migrant workers in the nineteen-thirties as he had found them in Steinbeck's book.

One senior who later won a major scholarship read Arnold Toynbee's work for several months and finally in a paper and a lecturette summarized the major points of Toynbee's view of history. A girl who won a Merit Scholarship made a detailed comparison of the characters of Brutus and Macbeth. Literary critics might or might not smile at the ten pages in which she showed a "similar pattern in the external circumstances but an essential difference in the psychological reactions." Other examples: "The Women in Benet's *John Brown's Body*"; "What John Donne's

Poetry Means to Me"; "Unorthodox Ideas in Dostoevski's Grand Inquisitor"; "Social Conditions of the Nineteenth Century as Found in *David Copperfield*." Writers of the first two papers won local Phi Beta Kappa prizes. Almost all papers were presented not as readings but as effective oral reports on which the class took notes.

CONVERSATION CIRCLES

Bored by the traditional book report, students of superior reading and speaking ability are often very effective in conversation circles held for the class to "listen in." Good readers' enthusiasm for books most students would find too long or too difficult gives the mediocre pupil respect for such work. At the blackboard, a secretary spells accurately title, author, and characters of each work as it is discussed. On a page in their notebooks entitled *Some of the World's Great Books* all members of the class record these data. Inability to read such a book is no excuse for not knowing, for example, that a Spaniard named Cervantes wrote a satire, what he satirized, and why we use the word "quixotic" to describe someone idealistically unpractical.

READING LOGS

Whether we have only four or five talented seniors in a mixed group, or whether we have a whole class of young people, these Reading Logs afford satisfying records of their extensive reading. There are summaries of excellent articles in *Saturday Review*, *Harper's*, *Holiday*, *Atlantic*, (for much high quality periodical reading should be required). Here, too, is practice in summarizing what has been learned from much *non-fiction*. While reading *fiction*, students are urged to write a few lines almost daily, to develop the ability to live vicariously in the time and with the people of the book. A girl reading the *Brothers Karamazov* writes in her log: "Tonight I agonized with Alyosha as his father, Fyodor, humiliated him with his buffoonery before Father Zassima whom Alyosha adores. But why did the Father fall on his knees before Dimitri? I as as bewildered as Alyosha."

ENRICHING EXPERIENCES

A resourceful teacher can find in the community sources of unusual experiences, enriching in themselves and stimuli for self-expression. Before good writers go on such an "adventure" they may be stimulated by hearing the best poems and essays written

by former classes describing their reactions to a similar but *not the same* "adventure." Recently to insure the "thrill of recognition," a teacher assigned reading about and discussion of a few art masterpieces known to be in the state museum. Discovering in the museum the masterpieces referred to in class was a delight to these talented young people. Some of the essays and poems resulting from the class visit were requested by the curator of education who astonished the writers by photostating their writing for his files.

SUPERIOR STUDENTS AS CLINICIANS

Some of the best senior writers act as advisers to their classmates in the writing periods. "I never learned so much myself as when I had to look up points of usage to help the other guys," one senior wrote. Sometimes a set of themes from a sophomore or junior section can be divided among superior seniors, who are, of course, given criteria. Besides checking mechanics and explaining corrections (they do *not* grade), these students can comment fully and effectively on content. They are required to find one good thing to say about each paper, and they must write questions that will lead underclassmen to revise or develop further. The senior instructor reads these comments and corrections (which indicates the senior's own critical and rhetorical ability) before returning the themes to the teacher of the sophomore or junior section.

GROUP SCRIPTS AND PRODUCTIONS

Perhaps this activity can best be described by picturing a superior class at work. In each corner of the room and out in the corridor is a group of seven seniors. Each group is planning a program based on a modern author not studied in class. One group, for example, has read Archibald MacLeish poems including *Fall of the City* and *J. B.* Another group has read eight plays of G. B. Shaw. All have read and summarized literary criticism. Now these groups are planning the writing of a script to present, *not* the facts of the author's life, but the quality of his work. In the script the group must interpret as much of a poem or play or novel as is necessary to audience understanding. The culmination of the two-day program, which is produced in the auditorium during the regular class periods, will be the acting out of scenes or choral reading of poems from memory. No teacher assistance is given during the two-week period. Sometimes a genuine production ensues, with costumes, musical background, and program notes.

Any group whose rehearsals really please them may invite to their program sophomore and junior classes that meet at that period.

INDEPENDENT HONOR PROJECTS

When diagnosis indicates they have mastered most English skills, why should we not excuse these superior seniors from class drill or revision periods? Should they not be using such periods for independent work? Plans for the coming year in the Broughton English department include an HONORS PROGRAM—an afternoon when parents and faculty are invited to hear these seniors present their semi-independent research or original work. The public reading will require the most effective written form and effective oral presentations. All papers will not necessarily be in the field of literature or creative writing. Probably supervised by subject teacher and English teacher, some may be in scientific, historical, or sociological fields. Involving all the English skills, such independent work should capture the keen interest and challenge the capacity of the talented student for whom every school has a particular responsibility.

North Carolina English Teacher, October, 1959

Can't Say No!

WILLIAM W. WEST

For almost fifteen years audiences have roared at Ado Annie's gay immorality as she sings the *Oklahoma* hit:

I'm just a girl who can't say no.
I'm in a terrible fix!
I always say, 'Come on! Let's go!'
Just when I ought to say, 'Nix!'

The average English teacher finds herself singing, at least subconsciously, this same song. But somehow, the teacher's song lacks the proverbial "gay abandon," the "delicious wantonness," the romantic certainty that all will end well.

Her song, however, does not lack immorality.

The English teacher who can't say no—to the yearbook, the school paper, the three class plays, the debate team, the forensics competition, the responsibility for school press releases—and the myriad other duties which have traditionally fallen to the English department is equally immoral.

But her immorality, rather than smacking of humorous gaiety, smacks of dreary fatigue, enervating sacrifice of time, dereliction of duty, and senseless abandonment of basic purpose.

"But I have to direct these extra-curricular activities!" the English teacher may groan. "My predecessors have always had the plays . . . It's traditional . . ."

And I counter with the question, "Did your predecessors *try* to say 'No'? Not rudely. Not belligerently. But intelligently. "Have your predecessors talked logically, presenting the facts to the administrators? Have they worked cooperatively with the principal in trying to answer the question, 'Why can't Johnny read . . . or write . . . or think?'"

According to some 300 veteran English teachers who were questioned in a California study, the average high school student should write not less than 250 words each week. And for maximum benefit, he should re-work each of these papers after it is corrected by the teacher.

The California study then asked these teachers to correct several papers of this length. Depending upon the extent of their corrections, they spent from about two to eight minutes for each theme. If the average teacher has five classes of thirty students in a class, she must spend a minimum of five hours each week outside of class in the theme correction alone. If she were to give the desirable creative corrections for each paper, she would spend over twenty hours a week! And this out-of-class time does not include the time spent in preparation, in writing and checking tests, in meeting students for conferences, and in professional improvement!

Obviously, the load is already too great! But now add more than one extra-curricular activity—without released time—and you have the English teacher's prime job crowded out of her schedule. She can't slight her three plays, for there will be some five hundred parents at each performance. She *can* cut her theme corrections and her preparations to fit into her little remaining time. The result? Workbook exercises, hours of discussion of Lit-er-a-choor, objective tests that measure nothing, uncorrected themes—in short, the prostitution of our profession.

Dr. James B. Conant, formerly President of Harvard University, when asked during a conference at the William Horlick High School in Racine, Wisconsin, if he envisioned a solution to the problem of students' reading and writing poorly, answered without hesitation, "Certainly. Limit the load of high school English teachers to a maximum of one hundred students!"

When you approach your superintendent with your problem, I can't guarantee that he'll cut your load to one hundred students, but I can assure you that he's a reasonable man. He will be conscious of parental criticism concerning the English skills of graduates. And he will be sensitive to the teacher shortage. Naturally, he may expect you to spend an evening a week helping the teacher who replaces you as director of that second play, or he may ask that you discuss your over-load at an open faculty meeting, or he may ask for time to change the tradition. *But he won't argue that any other teacher is expected to spend from eight to twenty hours out of class just in correcting written work every week.*

Unfortunately, few of us can have the pleasure of shouting that ringing, resounding, triumphant, "No!" when asked to perform additional duties. But we can—and we must—for the sake of our students—take the first steps in changing the custom that gives everything extra to the English teacher.

President Warren G. Harding once confided to the Washington Press Club that his father had shouted at him, "Warren, it's a good thing you weren't born a girl or you'd be in a family way constantly. You haven't learned to say no!"

English teachers, too, have not learned to say, "No," and the "morning sickness" of our pregnancy sometimes lasts all day—and far into the night.

Iowa English Bulletin, October, 1958

"Open-Hearted Touching"

A. C. HOWELL, University of North Carolina

I was looking at a photograph of a Korean painting entitled "A Man Sitting on a Rock," by In Jae (1419-1465); the caption, in Korean English, read "In this piece, his high knowledge and his decent character are well reflected in the character of the painting. The meditating scholar seems to influence one of a poetic emotion by his free and candid brush." I was trying to blue-pencil it into English minus the Korean.

Of all the strange requests I received while serving as visiting professor in Seoul National University, this was the most unusual. I did not spend all my time introducing eager Korean students to American Literature, from "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," to "Light in August." Sometimes I had to interpret racy Americanisms like "behind the eight ball," and "scratched," or

"middle-brow," "egg-head," and less innocuous terms. There were dialogues on functional grammar, pattern sentences, and why a streetcar should be named "Desire."

And now the Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs had requested me to revise and edit the captions for a book on Korean painting and sculpture. I undertook the assignment equipped only with good-will. I agreed to try to polish the literal translation of captions to accompany reproductions of a hundred masterpieces of Korean art furnished me by a Korean colleague who knew English words, but not the vocabulary of art criticism.

Together we set to work. The material we had to work with was a series of sensitive and often esoteric comments by a competent Korean art critic. These my colleague, with his dictionary before him, turned into English word by word. Describing a delicate painting of a bamboo, the professor wrote, "Highly spirited atmosphere is well-produced through his open-hearted touching." Another caption read: "This work portrayed the beautiful scenery of Sea Diamond Mountains and he produced an open-hearted and grand feeling of the cliff and trees on it with his own peculiar technique." The complete caption for "A Plum Flower Screen of Ten Pieces" by Sung Up Chang (19th Century) read: "This work seems to remind the artistic aspect of Sung Up Chang who was reckless as well as elegant as an artist. With his open-hearted touch, he drew two old plums of red and white which produced a powerful and decent reverberation. The influential touch on each branch, and the rhythm of the line, together with the glorious light of Indian ink make one feel ecstasy by his highly spirited touch."

Such "Korean" English called for a rewrite job, in reverse; instead of explaining English idioms to Koreans, I was trying to put Korean idioms into English. Having photographs of the paintings before me helped; and remembering the lack of any articles in Korean and the possibility of several English meanings for a Korean word in a Korean-English dictionary, I started some "open-hearted (re) touching." "Open-hearted," "reckless," and "influential" were puzzlers; so was the frequent use of "decent," and "touching"; for example: "The harmony of mild color with the main blue-green is producing a decent impression," and "done by the rapid but elegant touch."

I am afraid that when I got through with the captions, the Korean art critic would not credit them with "producing a decent impression"; and I blush to think what a Western art critic will say; the air, I'm sure, will be filled with "powerful" if not "decent

reverberations." But where angels fear—I flourished my professional blue-pencil.

For the "Highly spirited atmosphere . . ." describing the paintings of a bamboo, I substituted "An atmosphere of joy and high spirits is effectively portrayed by the light and graceful strokes of his brush." Instead of the sentence about the "open-hearted and grand" feeling induced by the Diamond Mountains, I wrote, more tamely, "This work portrays, with its peculiar technique, the beautiful scenery of the Sea Diamond Mountains and produces in the beholder an open-hearted and exalted feeling, as he gazes at the tree-covered cliff."

Sung Up Chang's painting of the Plum-tree was so lovely that I was tempted to write my own description, but refrained. Instead, I tried to preserve the spirit if not the words of the original: "This work seems well to sum up the qualities of Sung Up Chang's art; he was a bold as well as an elegant artist. Using the brush lavishly, he has drawn two old plum trees full of red and white flowers to produce a powerful reverberation of color and light. The skilful touch apparent in the drawing of each branch, and the rhythm of the line, together with the glorious light of the India inks, make one feel a real ecstasy of high spirits which conveys the very air of spring."

For one or two I simply wrote my own captions because I couldn't make sense out of the original; for example, this sentence describing a painting of two cats: "As his works are easy to understand, he draws more people to support his art," or this: "the pose of the lofty old man standing aloof." Actually I was looking at a stately old gentleman crossing a stream. I had trouble with this one, too: "Grand aspect of a fairy land was drawn in an stout by the open-hearted touch of the artist. Moving scene of the nature is well expressed in the thick and powerful stroke. The friendly view of man and deer produces a beautiful impression far beyond the commonplace man. This work done by a peculiar manner shows the artists's extraordinary talent to be a great painter."

Then there was the "small piece done on the spot by his own will" of the "KiSang Before Lotus Leaves," (KiSang is Korean for Geisha) "a carefree woman holding a smoking pipe. It also produces some pleasant reverberations by showing fragments of KiSang life during Lee Dynasty."

These samples show the impossibility of putting Oriental ideas into Occidental dress without taking away from them an indefinable quality. My corrections, I fear, do not have what the Korean critic

would have called "open-hearted" "decency." We Occidentals lack what one caption summed up as "The profound reality and the vibrating elegance" which "are deserving to give one a feeling of ecstasy beyond description." Lafcadio Hearn would have understood that.

Gazing at a statue of a disciple of Buddha, the Korean critic was moved to write, "This is a quiet pose on the seventh stone to the left of Suk Kul Am Stone Cave. This statue expresses the overflowing quietness in deep mediation with two hands crossing and standing on a lotus pedestal. The matured expression of fingers reminds one of sensuality." Looking at the photograph with the eye of an Occidental, I could see only the inscrutable Oriental calm of a severely plain stone figure. I felt no "pleasant reverberations."

I never did learn what "open-hearted" meant.

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